demo
a harthouse magazine

Demo Music Magazine is hub for music lovers at Hart House and the University of Toronto. We provide unique opportunities to learn about music journalism, connect budding journalists and readers to the broader music community—both local and global—and get talented artists the exposure they deserve.

# Where abouts

# introduction

## *A Note from the Co-Editors*

By reading this, you know that Demo looks a little different this year. By moving away from the glossy magazine we all grew to love, we're giving back to both our community and our writers. In this format, you get to see more of their hard work and ours. Whereabouts is a theme for the locals who spend too much money on entry fees and drift in and out of venues like it's their second home. It's for the musicians who play to mostly empty rooms, until suddenly they aren't anymore. It's for anyone who has ever experienced live music and was transported back in time. Most of all, it's for you. Thank you for picking up a copy and giving us a chance to show what we've been up to. We hope you like it.

Until next time,

Jane Wen, Hayden Zahary, Jonah Page, and Finch Strub
Your Co-Editors in Chief

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# IShowSpeed Made a Brazillian Funk Album (and it's actually pretty good)

Written & Designed by Jonah Page

If that entire title made sense to you, then you should probably stop reading this and check out the album, because your brain is likely properly rotted enough to enjoy its braggadocio nonsense lyrics and citric-acid sugary distorted beats. If you are unsure what either half of the title means, keep reading.

Brazilian Funk, otherwise known as Baile Funk or simply Funk, is an umbrella term for a genre of electronic dance music from Brazil. While its origins lie in a fusion of samba, Miami bass, hip-hop, Latin freestyle, afrobeat, traditional African music, and, of course, American Funk, the kinds of music being released under the genre heading in the 2020s would be completely unrecognizable to fans of its predecessor genres. Beats are often sparse in their arrangement, but overwhelming in their production. The simplicity of arrangement allows each element to comfortably get turned up to eleven, clip the entire fucking track, be louder than any other song you've ever heard, and turn the simplest portable speaker setup into an instant dance party from which one will not return with booty unshaken.

Its undeniable intensity, led by the proclivity for experimentation by its (often young) producers, has led to a surge in popularity in the english speaking world – among both music aficionados and TikTok scrollers alike, not to mention the steady growing popularity of Funk nights in North American nightclubs among the South American diaspora. Like it or not, Brazilian Funk is now part of "the culture," the homogenized slurry of feed that flows into our metaphorical troughs; still the best stuff retains the quality to make you feel like there's a Dionysian world of dancing and madness just outside your doors.

Speed's Trip to Brazil seems to understand the genre at this orgiastic level, talking gibberish in multiple languages and taking several steps back to let the brain-splitting production do its damn thing. It doesn't achieve quite the level of intensity, intrigue, or experimentation as stuff like DJ K's PANICO NO SUBMUNDO or d.silvestre's self-titled, nor does it have the dancefloor appeal as the best singles coming out of São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, but it is easily the best project that an english speaker has released.

This is funny, because IShowSpeed is not a musician by trade: he's a streamer. The biggest English-speaking streamer on YouTube, whose fame initially came from viral TikTok clips of his video game induced rage-outs. What took him from minor phenom to global sensation started simply with him claiming that "Cristar Ronaldo" was his favorite football team, which slowly evolved into an influx of fans from Europe and South America, an obsession with FIFA and the Portugal FC, and eventually a world tour. Speed's growing authentic appreciation for world cultures was incredibly endearing, and seemed to mark a significant development in his own self-awareness in relation to global culture.

Before the EP introduces its Funk elements, the title track opener is a Jersey Club rap song featuring the of Jersey Club rap's most recent wave, Bandmanrill. This song opens up the album to not merely be a collection of songs in a certain style, but a collection of songs which are grounded in a place. It also ultimately changes the approach towards Brazilian music from being one of positioned difference, rather than merely uninterpretable difference or homogeneity. Speed is understanding Funk not as 'other' music, but as music from another part of the Black diaspora, connecting two different styles of dance music through authentic appreciation.

"Monkey" is a compelling song with some questionable/offensive lyrics that I think builds on this theme – but also might just be offensive for the sake of it. Either way, it shows that Speed is an excellent impressionist of Rap and Funk styles, to the point his lyrics are more sounds than words (à la "Mario be playin' T-Dub"), and also that TikTok-famous producer shonci is capable of making some great Funk beats with mainstream rap appeal. This is continued on "Amar De" sees Speed in his melodic bag for the first time, making a significantly better collaboration with legendary Funk vocalist MC Kevin O Chris than Drake did (look it up, it's awful).

"Get Down" is an interesting mid-point, because Speed barely raps at all. His greatest presence on the track is primarily through his use of his iconic bark, used percussively throughout the track. It's not the best, but it does show that Speed is willing to set his ego aside to let his image do the talking.

The last two songs, "Porradão" and "Seven" are the best, and the reason I'm writing this review. Speed commits himself fully, rapping primarily in Brazilian Portuguese (or "Portugeenese", as he calls it), a language he learned through trial and error while on his titular trip, in layers that bleed and bend over each other. They also feature shonci's most ambitious, dense, and dexterous production, which at high enough volumes might actually cause tissue damage (high praise). If you like Brazilian Funk, particularly Funk Paulista, then you should listen to "Seven." If you like "Seven," you should listen to more Brazilian Funk.

To say the album is great would be to write off Speed's amateurishness as an artistic statement, with no room to grow. Still, I do feel comfortable in saying it is pretty good: it treats Brazilian Funk music with respect, and lavishes in authentic enjoyment of it.

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# ME AND MY BEST FRIEND, FAR AWAY

Written By
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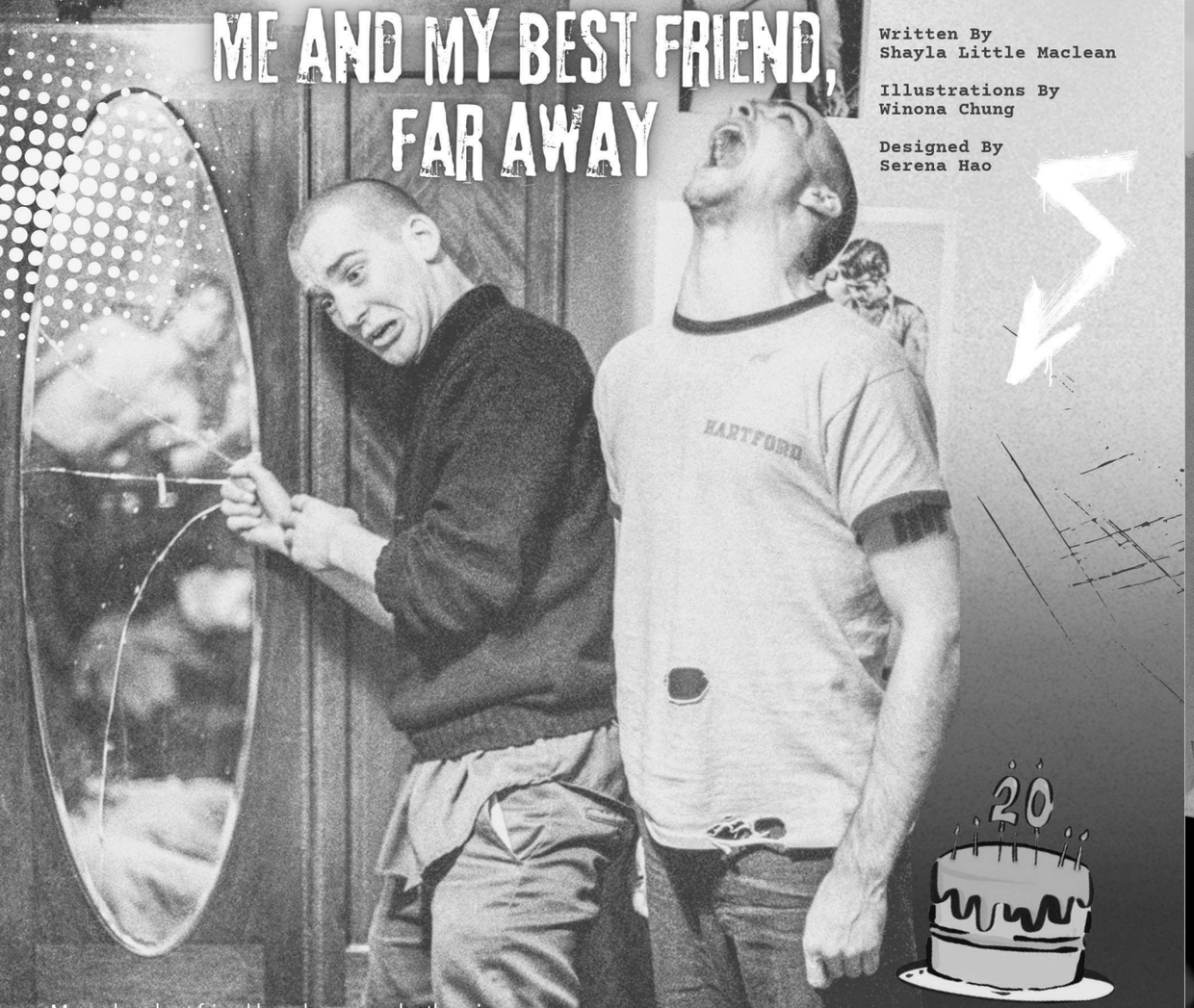



Me and my best friend have known each other since first grade. We met at six years old and we're turning 20 this November. Our friendship is something I'm very grateful to have in my life - not everyone has a best friend, let alone one they've known for as long as they can remember. Something that's really great about knowing someone so intimately and for so long is being able to see how they change and evolve as a person. My favorite change as of late is seeing my best friend exploring the music I love. This music is now something we both love, and it makes me deeply happy. I'll tell you a bit about how we got here.

My best friend always had a huge influence over what I enjoyed as a kid. During our recess time, she slowly whittled away a special place in my heart for video games. She would introduce me to all kinds of video games: old games, new releases, bad games, cult classics. She would come to my house and play Bloodborne while I sat and watched intently, and we would play rhythm games together during lunch period. We tried to get all the new cards of the cutest anime girls and see who could get the biggest combo.



# Hopeful Reminiscence:

## Julien Baker at The Concert Hall

Written by Tyson Telfer
Designed by Louise Lee

I always thought it was insane behaviour to line up 7+ hours before a concert...so naturally, there I was walking down Yonge Street at 12:00pm for Julien Baker's 7:00pm show at The Concert Hall on October 1st. Sitting on the sidewalk in the stinging October air was certainly not for the weak, so the adrenaline rush of racing for the stage barricade was welcome. Many of the indie and adjacent performers I have gotten to see live have a particular intimacy with the audience, perhaps due to having a smaller fanbase. Baker was no exception to this, being an open book with the audience from the moment she took the stage. Signature tattoo sleeves and all, Baker is undeniably cool in every sense of the word, yet she never loses the deep sincerity which makes her music so great.

With Baker's setlist changing every other show, I had next to no idea what emotional onslaught I would be subjected to with each song. From the biting self-sabotage of "Ringside" to the catastrophizing in "Hardline," Baker is an expert at repurposing dark feelings into a sense of healing present in her music. Nowhere is this more evident than in her live performance, where Baker changes melodies and instrumentation to completely reinvent the songs from their recorded versions. Laced throughout the performance as well was the endlessly strange, spaghettifying feeling of how different my life was compared to when I first was introduced to Baker's music. The songs have grown and changed with me and have taken on new meaning than when I was 14. Thinking back to where I was and how I felt first listening to these words, to now hear them echo through the venue was surreal. Great music, particularly when performed live, both throws you back to a place and time that those words are connected to and grounds you in the present, as you hear the music in a new time and new place.

Music becomes a metaphysical body when attached to an experience or memory, embedding itself in a moment in time. Hearing the shredded guitars and devastating lyrics of Baker's songs live reminds me of the first time I listened to her music. I can't return to being a high school freshman, but the same music I listened to can put me close. The words that once rang in my ears while walking down locker-lined halls or in the backseat of my parents' car now find me at the barricade of a packed floor space, where I am making new memories with the music. With the bass reverberating through my bones, I seem suspended between the past and present, thinking of the places I've been and the places I will be going next.

Baker throws guitar picks into outstretched hands and powers through technical issues like a true star. This is to say, when Baker came back out to the stage for the encore of "Everybody Does," the room was electric. As the ultimate band-coming-together song, it hit with a wave of release that everybody in the room had been craving. Building until the entire venue screams the outro "you're gonna run, it's alright, everybody does," the song inverts its meaning on itself, transforming from a self-deprecating ballad to an assertion of yourself and who you are.

Julien Baker's concert was a truly transformative experience on many levels, turning reminiscing into hoping and replacing old memories with new ones. Nowhere but at a concert can you feel so connected to the places and feelings that meant so much in the past, while forging a new path with the knowledge you've gained. Baker puts on an intense, emotionally-charged show which makes me excited for what the future holds; for her music and for my own life.

# How to Discover New Music: An Unconventional Guide

WRITTEN BY MILENA TALLARICO
DESIGNED BY JONAH PAGE

*"I bet you just log onto Spotify and search 'obscure, unknown artists,'"* a sentiment I've heard more times than I can count, repeated in various different phrasings. This is often a reaction to a recountment of any of my many concert escapades – most commonly, the time I found myself sitting on the carpeted floor of a garage in the city, gazing up at one of my favourite indie pop duos after being invited to a private show via email. While this particular instance seemed to spark more concern than curiosity, it did get me thinking about how I found myself in such a coveted position (and how you can to!). Through this guide, I have detailed my favourite ways to discover new artists in the hopes to inspire you to do the same.

**1. Going to shows:** Live Music is easily the most effective way to find new artists you resonate with. This especially applies to the opener of a headliner you already enjoy. Openers are selected to share stylistic similarities to the headliner, which is vital if you are aiming for artists that capture a specific sound or genre. I've grown to love many artists after watching them open for my favourite musicians: Claud at the Phoebe Bridgers Reunion Tour, Jensen McRae at Noah Kahan's Stick Season Tour, and Katie Malco at the recent Julien Baker tour.

**2. TikTok:** It's undeniable that the app has become a hub for music marketing that has entirely reimagined what it means to have achieved stardom or musical acclaim. While the scroll is endless, the artists I've discovered on Tiktok have always had some fateful connection that compelled me to follow their music. I became an avid listener of Hana Bryanne after coming across a video of her strumming in front of a lemon tree to a still-unreleased song. The lyrics, inspired by Paige Lewis' "Because the Color Is Half the Taste" – a poem I love – drew me to the rest of her discography.

**3. Human-curated playlists:** I've rarely discovered artists from the conventional, algorithmically generated "Discover Weekly" playlist on Spotify. Each time I've encountered someone I like on the streaming service, it's pure coincidence. In 2019, before Phoebe Bridgers had received such mainstream acclaim, and before she had even released her sophomore album, *Punisher*, I stumbled across her song "Killer" – which remains, to this day, my favourite – on a playlist curated by the admin of an Instagram music meme account. Such absurdity has made the listening experience even more memorable.

These methods may be obvious or even subconscious to you already. While I often follow them unintentionally, it still strikes me as novel when I encounter a new artist without truly meaning to. The music you need to hear will find you wherever you are, but it always helps to look.

Once we got to high school, I started to listen to music instead of playing games. I loved everything under the punk, grunge or 90s alternative umbrellas, and I would obsess over dozens of bands. My best friend was content with sticking to The Arctic Monkeys and Franz Ferdinand, so we ended up in two different musical bubbles. Then we graduated, and I stayed in Scarborough to work a minimum wage job and be uncertain about my future, while she left town to go 400 kilometers east and study in Ottawa. While I missed having her by my side so we could blabber about every stupid thing on our minds, I can't say things changed that much. Instead of sitting on the cold hallway floors during lunch period every weekday, we write each other letters. Each one gets a different colour of wax seal that I spend way too much time deciding on.

A few months after she left, I got a message from her saying: "I like this song". Linked was "Seeing Red" by Minor Threat. She would start sending me punk songs I didn't even know yet, but that were extremely good. I felt like a proud father watching his child hitting a home run for the first time. Now I'm always curious what she's up to, who's on her new playlist, and I feel delighted when I see her listen to the obscure deep cuts I used to listen to in my room, alone.

I went into this article wanting to say that the interests we share are like the glue in our friendship, that they keep us together. But I don't think that's quite true. I don't think we need any kind of glue. Our friendship feels like a tall, sturdy house, built with two sets of hands over the years. As time passes, it gets painted different colours, it gets new decorations, and some renovations for what is old and out of date. But it's still the same house, no matter how much it may change. I think that recently, we've gotten a record player for our house. It plays Misfits, Pixies, Fugazi, Jimi Hendrix, Midori, Japanese pop music, and lots of 13 minute hardcore EPs. We take turns deciding what gets a spin, but I like it all.

I visited her in Ottawa last week. As I laid on a mattress on her floor, we talked about how Henry Rollins seems to be part of every band and in every photo taken at hardcore shows in the 80s. I introduced her to the Faith/Void split. We listened to Polvo while baking an Earl Grey-flavoured early-birthday cake. But it felt like we were still kids when we spent hours and hours playing Fallout: New Vegas, laughing so hard that it hurt my stomach. Aside from the occasional trip or return home for the holidays, we still have that 400km spanning between us. But the distance doesn't matter. Things just change a little bit. We can't split a pair of earbuds between our heads, but I can send her links to songs I think she'll like. In my letters, I slip an old Misfits skull pin in the envelope, and I tell her about the music magazine I'd like to write for.

# A YEAR IN MUSIC

*12 albums for 12 months*

By Serena Hao

## JANUARY

***Homogenic***
Bjork

*Homogenic* is a wintery masterpiece that exudes nothing but cold. The album was intended to be an homage to Bjork's native Iceland, emulating its music, culture, and geography. The glitchy, electronic beats on songs like "5 Years" and "Pluto" feel like shards of ice breaking under footsteps. On "Joga," the melodic string arrangements add a bit more warmth to the trip hop breakbeats, as if watching a snowstorm from the window of a train barreling through a forest. The vocals, the highlight of any Bjork album, have both gentle, ethereal moments and infectiously fun screams, like the sequence of increasingly intense shrieks at the end of "Pluto". Even the album cover itself exudes winter– with cool toned blues and purples alongside frost-like fractals. *Homogenic* depicts a white, snowy landscape and the biting cold air of January.

## FEBRUARY

***Arkhaiomelisidonophunikheratos***
Satanicpornocultshop

While the names of both the album and band may be overwhelming, the glitchy, folky, pop sounds of *Arkhaiomelisidonophunikheratos* are very much not. This peaceful and gentle but never boring record emulates the bittersweet feelings of February perfectly. The album's opener, "New Years Snow" melds the cold, winter weather with lyrics about "springtime air", which perfectly captures the month's slowly melting snow. At the same time, songs like "(R.I.P.) Tide" and "Custom Drum Destroyer" feature brighter instrumentation and fun, repetitive lyrics for sunnier days and warmer weather. This quirky record which dances between so many genres captures both the cold winter and beginnings of spring characteristic of February.

## MAY

***Stereotype A***
Cibo Matta

With spring slowly transitioning into summer, what's better than some funky Japanese pop to match the increasingly happy weather? *Stereotype A* is an eclectic mix of genres, both not afraid to take a few risks and be bold, and pretty unique in its sound. One thing is certain though: these earworm melodies are going to be stuck in your head for days. If you're simply looking for a fun pop jam to match your mood, "Working For Vacation" or "Spoon" have got your back, while "Blue Train" is a moody metal track, and "Stone" provides a chilled out bossa nova break. No matter what song you play, *Stereotype A* never fails at being a lighthearted album that's full of whatever funky sound you're looking for.

## JUNE

***Strawberry Jam***
Animal Collective

This psychedelic pop pick is warm, vivid, and lively. It sounds unbelievably lush and full. The track "Fireworks" and the opener "Peacebone" sound just like how the bright noon sun feels on your arms. The instrumentation is twinkly, chaotic, and densely layered, making for a psychedelic listening experience that is tons of fun. The lyrics are deeply nostalgic and introspective, and the whole album is an ode to childhood– something that seems fitting for a month I associate with the start of summer vacation. Even though songs like "Unsolved Mysteries" are all about growing up and changing, *Strawberry Jam*'s sentimental lyrics don't stop it from having fun. "Chores" is a song about wanting to get high, and the growly screaming on "Peacebone" is infectiously energetic. This album is a quirky mess of noise with touching lyrics that feels like 25 degree weather, perfect for the start of summer.



The sounds of the album carry just as much weight as the messages behind it. With the tracklist consisting of mostly new songs, there was plenty of room to experiment. Both members agree that entering the studio was less daunting the second time around. Lamb says, "I had a lot more fun, and we got a lot more done," and Vallejo chimes in, "Yeah, it was definitely different. We knew what to expect." Even though the atmosphere was more relaxed, the band still mentions that there was pressure to be perfect. "I would change a lot in hindsight, but I am very proud of [the EP]. I think this is the best thing that I've ever made," says Lamb. "I [would have] done more vocal takes, but I'm sick of annoying Gordon Raphael and Avalon and everyone in the studio." Despite what he would say, the perceived 'weak spots' on the EP are actually some of the strongest in my opinion. Vallejo affirms this, anticipating that the deeply personal "Live to Deprive" will be the fan favourite regardless of Lamb's dislike for the vocals on the track. Acting as the sibling to the single "Paradigm," the song offers a different, heavier emotion. It plays into the depressing nostalgia of Blink-182's "Adam's Song" and Fall Out Boy's "What A Catch, Donnie" without feeling copycat, combining a wall of distortion and pounding drums with gut-wrenching lyrics that effortlessly call back to the early aughts.

Despite some back and forth, both singles did end up making the tracklist. "Originally we were just going to do new songs, but we didn't have the money or time to [make that happen]. Putting 'Paradigm' on there was definitely [an on-and-off decision]," says Lamb. Vallejo adds, "it sounds silly, but we wrote out all the names just to see how it would look." While "Agitprop" follows in the footsteps of "Blood Sports", Lambs feels that the former is stronger than the latter. "We tried to use the same equipment [on both tracks] to try and keep the same fluid sound throughout the whole EP, but "Agitprop" is more of us exploring what we can do with our sound," he explains. While the influences remain mostly the same throughout the EP, the addition of Spanish-style flamenco guitar was an important shift for Vallejo. He says, "That's a part of my culture, and you see Pierce The Veil incorporate some of that. They're one of my favourite bands, and so that's something I wanted to [do too]." The band also cite Muse and The Voidz as other inspirations, especially in terms of synth. This is most audible on the aforementioned interlude "Just a War", which features producer Gordon Raphael heavily. Lamb points out, "Gordon did a lot of [that track], the whole ending is just him. We said 'Gordon, we're giving you free reign,' and he said, 'I can see the vision.'" Clearly, the band continues to grow as their career continues, refusing to remain static with their art.

Agitprop of America marks a new chapter for Lighterless, acting as a gateway to an album that is already in the works. While their sound might be ever-changing, their staunch politics and desire to educate their growing fanbase aren't going anywhere. The duo are bastions of what mixing art and activism looks like in the modern age. It doesn't hurt that their music is great, either.

# POLITICS, PROPAGANDA AND PLACE:

*Lighterless Speak Out on Their Upcoming EP*

*Written By Finch Strub*
*Designed By Serena Hao*

Since I last spoke to them, Lighterless have come into their own. After releasing two singles earlier this year, their return to the studio was even more fruitful. Set to release at the end of this year, the impending five-track EP offers a more in-depth look into their ethos as a band, taking a no-holds-barred approach to talking about issues around the world.

Both the name of the opening track and the first word of the EP's title leave no room for interpretation, drawing inspiration from a political term used for Soviet propaganda in the 1980s. The title, Agitprop of America, is written in bright red block letters on the wall behind the band's heads, staring me down throughout the interview. It isn't afraid to be bold, calling back to its roots in both sound and aesthetic. "It's hard to say 'aesthetic' when it's such a serious topic, but it's very eye-catching. [Adding 'of America' to a concept tied to communist Russia] draws parallels that people might be uncomfortable to talk about," says frontman Zach Lamb. However, the same factors that make the EP stand out are also what make it hard to market. Drummer Avalon Vallejo explains that, "Music is how we get things out and how we get people to listen, and it has to be catchy and something that people will want to listen to. It has to be aesthetically pleasing, but it is dealing with serious topics. We've been trying to figure out how to work about that sensitively, and not try [to] just [promote] our work." There are challenges that come along with making art about current events, including the wars in both Ukraine and Gaza, but the band is determined to do what they can to raise awareness.

As a Polish immigrant, Lamb notes that the conflict in Ukraine is of particular interest. On the track "Just a War," he delves into the fact that he doesn't feel the same distance from the war as the average American. He explains, "It's really big for me personally because it's right next to home, and it's really interesting to write about it from Raymore, Missouri. Location has always had a really big impact on my writing, [even from when I was little]." Lamb's own identity makes his view on politics that much more complex. "It's strange, because at this point I think I know American politics better than UK or Polish politics. Growing up I was told 'you don't get a say in this country, you're not from here' and now it's my life's mission to know more than every Republican," he says with a laugh. "Honestly, coming [to America] feels like a downgrade. [People here] don't see anything except their own wellbeing, it's upsetting." Vallejo adds that "[Zach's] definitely taken less seriously [as an immigrant] because it's like 'how are you going to talk about America when you're not even from here?' [even though] he's been living here for six years." The band aims to harness these same lived experiences and interest in politics to make a positive impact on their viewers, alongside offering an easy way to start learning about global issues. As Gerard Way once said, "art is the weapon."

## MARCH

***I Love You Jennifer B***
Jockstrap

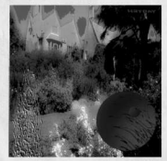
I *Love You Jennifer B* balances March's budding flowers and lingering frost with its glitch pop sound. This deconstructed, disjointed, and sometimes nonsensical record is just the right pop hit that's still sufficiently icy cold. Most songs on this album start out sounding cool and bare and build up to beautiful, opulent melodies, much like the March weather warming up as the lingering snow melts. While it is a pop record, segments like the discordant intro of "Concrete Over Water", the harp in "Glasgow", and the entirety of "Lancaster Court" add the slight cool breeze that make this album perfect for March. Though, the warm synths of "Debra" and more acoustic tracks like "What's It All About" maintain the sweet promise of Spring. *I Love You Jennifer B* alternates between cold, rainy spring showers and warm sunny days almost as rapidly as Canadian spring weather.

## APRIL

***New Long Leg***
Dry Cleaning

Dry Cleaning is a standout in the British post punk scene of the 2020s for their unique female vocals. In *New Long Leg*, Florence Shaw delivers the lyrics in this emotionless talk singing that is unbelievably cool. The lyrics in question are a show stopping mishmash of slightly nonsensical imagery. The record features lyrics about Instagram filters, 16th century German paintings, and llama plushies. "Every Day Carry" is a song composed only of non sequiturs, featuring miscellaneous lines from Shaw's notes for over seven minutes. "Her Hippo" features the line "I'd like to run away with you on a plane but don't bring those loafers" which encapsulates the sarcastic, "too cool" attitude of *New Long Leg*. Musically, Dry Cleaning is minimal but never boring; most songs are composed of only guitars, drums, bass and vocals which create a moody sound that feels like a cool breeze on an overcast day. However, the occasional brighter, catchier track like "New Long Leg" does appear between minimalistic, angstier songs like "Leafy". This sardonic, rebellious album has the attitude of someone stomping down a cement sidewalk with big black boots. This album is cool, both in demeanor and temperature, and completely perfect for Spring.

## JULY



***Hayday***
Feeble Little Horse

The short and sweet noise pop record that is *Hayday* captures the chaotic high energy of July. Its lyrics are tongue-in-cheek, like "Good boys know how to be polite" on "Chores" and its samples are silly, like the Clone High clip in "Kennedy". *Hayday* never takes itself too seriously. The album's fuzzy shoegaze guitars and sassy singing is like summer vacation fun under the hot afternoon sun. These songs capture teenage shenanigans, a bit of rebellion, and maybe even a summer fling. "Picture" expresses the tension of a crush, the shy refrain of "if you're thinking what I'm thinking" and twinkly instrumentals capture the start of a budding summer love. All in all, this record is a seriously fun listen that could easily act as the soundtrack for a coming-of-age film set over summer break.

## AUGUST

***Horse Jumper of Love***
Horse Jumper of Love

Horse Jumper of Love's debut album captures the lethargy of hot August evenings in its slow-going shoegaze sound and melancholic lyrics. The fuzzy and warm guitars feel like bathing in sweat and sun, lying in the grass next to your childhood best friend. In "DIRT", the lyrics that describe peeling an apple with your hands and sticky juice and dirt under your nails remind me of childhood picnics, playgrounds, and summer camp. Most songs, however, are a bit more bittersweet: the somehow even fuzzier guitars on "July 5th" feel like a dissociative realization that summer is ending. *Horse Jumper Of Love* is a languorous August night, occasionally interrupted by memories and an existential fear of the future.

## SEPTEMBER

***Sunchokes***
Remember Sports

An angsty, indie rock album that totals at just under half an hour, *Sunchokes* hits hard and fast. Every song is punchy and straight to the point, encapsulating the fervent energy of starting a new school year, captured further in lines like "Now it's a new year, guess I didn't notice" in the album's namesake track. Carmen Perry's high energy, scratchy singing pairs perfectly with their overall amateur sound to give a true teenage dirtbag energy to this album. The lyrics, which describe a nostalgic hometown in Ohio, make me nostalgic for my own suburban highschool experience. In line with its highschool sound is its highschool angst— *Sunchokes* is filled to the brim with a spunky attitude like on the critical lyrics of "Clean Jeans". This album is a time capsule of highschool for anyone who was a "misfit", and I can't help but put it on whenever the leaves start to yellow.

## OCTOBER

***There Existed An Addiction To Blood***
clipping.

For the spookiest season of the year, I picked the spine-chilling *There Existed An Addiction to Blood*. This horrorcore album combines classic horror tropes with a fast flow and noisy instrumentals. The beats are minimal and often eerie, like the screeching that sounds like a woman screaming on the track "Club Down". However, the instrumentals' true purpose is to allow the songwriting to shine, and the storytelling on this album is truly top notch. Daveed Diggs creates vivid narratives that marry traditional horror tropes like vampires, zombies, and werewolves with political issues: racialized police violence, trap house raids, and hierarchical religion. Diggs' fast, slightly monotonous, and vaguely menacing delivery nails the creepy atmosphere and keeps your attention captive. The ending track of this album features the audio of a piano on fire for eighteen minutes, a performance piece fittingly titled "Piano Burning", and concludes both the thematic and real horrors of this album.

## NOVEMBER

***Turn On The Bright Lights***
Interpol

November's wet gray slush that coats sidewalks and car tires is captured in Interpol's *Turn On The Bright Lights*. This record is a melancholic soundtrack for the lonely walks home taken by despondent city dwellers through harsh wind and biting winter air. "NYC" is a vivid expression of the smallness one feels in a city so big, the subway pavement, and dissatisfaction with life. This record's fairly simple instrumentation is unbelievably effective at conveying a dark atmosphere, thanks to the distorted guitars and layered sound. With the onset of seasonal depression approaching, *Turn On The Bright Lights* captures the overwhelming sense of emptiness that seeps into restless nights of November.

## DECEMBER

***Live At Jittery Joe's***
Jeff Mangum

While Jeff Mangum is primarily known for his work in Neutral Milk Hotel, this live album recorded in 1997 has a very special place in my heart. It is not polished by any means– throughout the record you can hear a baby crying and at the end of "Engine" Jeff asks the audience for something to drink– but I find its poor technical quality adds to his beautiful songwriting. The lyrics themselves create a scenic wintery atmosphere, with mentions of "Christmas trees in the snow" on "Two Headed Boy" and frost on "I Will Bury You In Time". The informal setup creates a warm and intimate atmosphere evocative of your uncle casually strumming his guitar by the fireplace on Christmas Eve. The cozy, homey sound of this album reminds me of winter break and watching the snowfall from the comfort of a couch.



the home I had there will no longer be something I could totally call my own. There is something immensely terrifying about leaving, about your life taking a sharp turn somewhere else. And maybe it was romanticized retrospection, but I began to find beauty in local strip malls, a late night in a friend's driveway as the crickets chirped, and the train tracks at the front of my neighborhood. That summer felt like the long, eight-minute plea of "Stay Home": "But that's life, so social/So social/But that's life, it's so-so-so/So emotional/So, stay home."

Midwest emo isn't a genre solely confined to the American Midwest, but I can't help but feel as if it's something personal to me, especially when I listen to it through my earbuds while lying on my twin bed in Toronto. It's a glimpse into home – or what used to be home, really.

"Honestly, I can't remember (teen dreams)/All my teenage feelings, and their meanings," Kinsella muses in "Honestly," and it's true – when I'm looking back, I can feel those memories starting to unfocus, stories beginning to unravel.

There's a reason why American Football LP1 is such a cult classic. It creates an intimate and dreamlike sonic landscape with only you in it, only your nostalgia for the things that will inevitably escape from your grasp. "And how we say goodbye/To these four years/A long goodbye/With mixed emotions/Just fragments of/Another life," Kinsella sings in "But the Regrets are Killing Me": as we wind from one home to the next and onward, we'll carry them with us.

# Honestly, I can't remember teen dreams

## *Relistening to American Football LP1*

Written By Audrey Lai
Designed By Serena Hao

There's a house in Urbana, Illinois that you've probably seen a photo of. It's a fuzzy digicam shot; the second-story light is on. You can almost see the warmth radiating from inside the house. Maybe someone is talking, maybe someone is getting ready for bed, maybe someone is writing a song. But you don't know, and you're on the outside looking in, and it's getting dark out, and the photo reel is already beginning to move to the next picture.

On October 18th, American Football released a 25th anniversary reissue of their 1999 self-titled album, *American Football* (commonly referred to as American Football LP1). The debut studio album is arguably the most ubiquitous Midwest emo album, their influence recognizable in the Midwest emo and math rock bands that came after them. The band, beginning as a couple of undergrads from the University of Illinois, formed right before the creation of the album and disbanded shortly after its release – a brief hiccup in time, really.

*American Football LP2* and *LP3*, both released almost two decades after LP1 when the band reformed, are phenomenal albums – but there's something special about *American Football LP1* that captures the ephemeral state between coming and going. The band's newer albums are clearly entrenched in adulthood, whereas *LP1* could only be made by a couple of university undergrads, on the precipice of change and in fear of what was to come. Maybe this is why this album sounds like missing something that isn't gone yet, holding it in your hands and knowing you will soon have to let it go.

The youthful and effervescent hooping and hollering of American Football's predecessor, Cap'n Jazz, is traded in for a nostalgic trumpet and a melancholic twinkly guitar.

The bittersweet wistfulness of *American Football LP1* perfectly encapsulates the 90s image of emo – awkward boys with long hair, glasses, sweater vests, and Converse playing music in the garage of their suburban home or the porch of a college house. Songs often begin with a long instrumental and end with lead singer Mike Kinsella crooning about young love that didn't work out or the fleeting nature of life, a line repeated again and again until the song finally peters out. Midwest emo is often criticized for being whiny and melodramatic – but what else is growing up if not that? The lyrics of *LP1* are simple and earnest, like a longing line you'd scribble in a diary or a thought you can't say out loud because it would make everything too real and vulnerable.

Released alongside the 25th anniversary reissue is a cover album, with artists Iron & Wine, Ethel Cain, Manchester Orchestra, and more sharing their own interpretations of the original nine tracks of the album. Ethel Cain's rendition of "For Sure" is a standout – the shoegaze influence works so well with the song and she makes the track sound haunting and a little ethereal, like an Ethel Cain song even though it's not so different from the original. The orchestral glissandos on Yvette Young's cover of "You Know I Should Be Leaving Soon" and the upbeat guitar on Manchester Orchestra's cover of "Stay Home" make the muted original songs grand and cinematic, as if seeing a distant memory in a retrospective supercut.

I discovered American Football the summer after my senior year of high school. As someone from the suburban Midwest, I had wanted nothing more but to leave, setting my eyes on schools in big cities, where it felt like life was exciting and moved faster. As college move-in loomed closer, though, I felt more and more connected to my hometown and the people and places in it. I realized that I was branching off, that



# SNOWSTORM

Despite the recent November heatwaves, the cold winter weather is inevitably inching closer for us here in Ontario. For some, winter is a time of celebrating holidays, reminiscing on the past year, and connecting with loved ones. For others, winter is harsh, bringing down their moods and amping up spiraling thought patterns. Regardless of your feelings on the chilly season, there is something so magical and complex about the first snowstorm of the year.

I created this playlist, Snowstorm, to capture the fluctuating moods that come along with this drastic weather change. While the gentle dusting of the first snowfall fills me with warmth and appreciation for life's beauty, the early sunsets and hours of darkness bring out a sense of sadness and apathy. My goal was to express these contrasting feelings and the complexities through the flow of the playlist. Some songs, like "4:00AM" by Taeko Onuki and "La Javanaise" by Serge Gainsbourg, feel like dancing through the glowing city streets as the snow gently covers the ground. Others, like "Where it's easy to be beautiful" by Micah Preite and "Head in the Ceiling Fan" by Title Fight, feel like laying awake at midnight wondering when winter break will be over already, because lord knows hours of darkness alone can bring the mind to bad places.

This playlist is best enjoyed listening chronologically with a 5-second crossfade, however the world is your oyster as the listener! While it may be a bit jarring, the flip-flop between different moods and shifts in tempo across the playlist is meant to represent the rollercoaster of emotions winter brings out for me, or even what occurs during the span of one single snowstorm. So, grab your favourite mug, make some hot chocolate, pop in your headphones, and enjoy the glistening snow outside while discovering some great new songs!

SCAN HERE!

WRITTEN BY MAE ELLIOTT
DESIGNED BY LOUISE LEE

# Analog Algorithm

*Written By Ella Mac*
*Designed By Serena Hao*

*There's an imposter in Demo's midsts: I don't actually have "good" music taste, whatever that is. I'm stuck in Spotify's algorithm, looping the same few songs out of habit. I need to break free of the machines, and get out there in the world! I decided to see how much I could improve my music taste by simply walking aroundwhereabouts. I wandered into every record store downtown armed only with a mic and one question: what's your favorite album? (If your favourite record store wasn't mentioned, I don't know what to tell you. The article is already too long, and I probably just didn't want to walk there.)*

## Rotate This

**Anonymous Pick:** PJ Harvey, *I Inside the Old Year Dying*

I went to Rotate This next. Maybe it was the way the sun was hitting the scratched wooden floors, but it felt like walking into some familiar sitcom set in a record store. Laughter was in the air. The employees I spoke with explicitly did not want to be recorded, nor seemed particularly happy to be interviewed in the first place, so I kept it very brief. I scurried out, trying to hold onto the name of their recent favourite album – I believe one of them mentioned the newest PJ Harvey album.

This album is definitely not my usual listen. Each song sounds like a spell being cast deep in the woods in a language you can't comprehend, the singer blowing the moss off each lyric with their falsetto. This was not a comforting album to listen to leaving the store, and the songs are especially anxiety-inducing for a first listen. You never know what is coming next.
Favourite Song: "I Inside the Old I Dying"

**Favorite Song:** "103"

## Emission Records

**Bee's Picks:** Subdued, *Abattoir* AND Lip Cream, *Kill Ugly Pop!*

This basement punk store was so cool. Bee gave me a tour of albums in genres I was completely unfamiliar with, with a particular lean towards anarcho punk. Bee swaps out their shelf of favorites every two weeks, so stop by for a new list of underground punk albums.

Subdued's Abattoir is anarcho punk – not necessarily a genre I am very familiar with. What I can say is the drumming is so impressive on this album. This would be a concert with sweat flying for sure. And I gotta say, I love a shorter album.

**Favorite Song:** "Machine Hell"

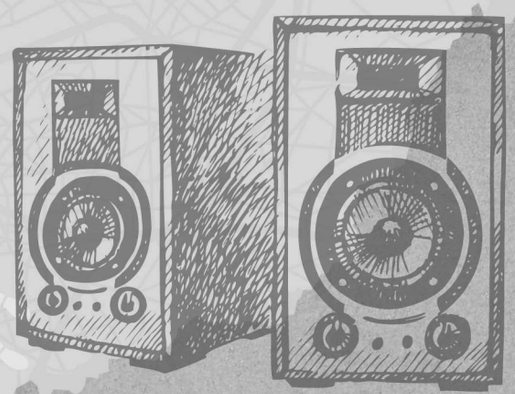
Kill Ugly Pop! is an album where I couldn't tell you what they're singing if my life depended on it, and Spotify's not helping either. The visceral sound is magnetic, having to listen to the full album definitely made me understand regular punk listeners a little bit more. I don't know if these albums have made it onto my regular rotation, but I will definitely add it to my library.

**Favorite Song:** "Sunset "

used by your favorite artists originated from Atlanta's "trap" houses, locations designated for drug deals that often operate within poverty-ridden Black communities. It almost makes you forget that the gospel music sampled in your favorite songs only exist today because of the resilience and faith of historically enslaved Africans in America. It almost makes you forget that the framework under which you consume music is intrinsically informed by your existence in the post-colonial Western world, rampant with neoliberal and capitalist ideals, both of which pop culture's legitimacy depends on.

To me, these acknowledgements are merely just that: acknowledgments. I didn't experience some radical shift in my music taste upon learning about these histories, and I most certainly don't expect anyone else to. Still, I think it's important that we reconcile pop culture's frivolousness with just how multidimensional music can be. So much of our experience with sound is bound to location, time, and context, something only a few of us avid music listeners actually take the time to realize. More than this, listening to music with the knowledge of its curation—how it's made, where it comes from, the people and places that inspired it—gives me a far more enlightened perspective as I'm listening. It makes me curious, engaged, and crave a community beyond my own. I think back to my experiences listening to one of my favorite albums: the hard-hitting, industrial Afrobeats off Beyoncé's *RENAISSANCE* that transport me to a vibrant dance floor all from the confines of my bedroom. The funky, disco grooves that make me feel as though I'm sharing an intimate and unspoken bond with a stranger, despite being alone. The music has some innate ability to manifest an existence outside of my physical context and forge a feeling of community without there actually being one. As I've aged with this album, my knowledge of its themes and histories have consolidated my enjoyment and understanding of it. I've learned about Harlem's ballroom scene, the emergence of voguing, and about queer Black artists' critical role in the revival and preservation of this sound.

I still don't quite know my roots, or why I like what I like. I find it both funny and intriguing (and only a little alienating) when I see people talk about their favorite location to experience music: a concert hall, a childhood beach, a temple, or the backseat of their dad's car. Perhaps it ignites memories within them, and with that, a nostalgia of sorts. Perhaps the scenery pervades the melodies and creates something magical. I don't really know. I think I'm still in the process of discovering these feelings, of finding somewhere that really resonates with my soul, and a place that feels like home. But I'm in no rush. Right now, the music is enough. As I listen to *RENAISSANCE* for the 400th time, my mind is transported to a club I've never been, with the same vivid images of dance, vogue, unwavering self-expression, and the same feelings of freedom and liberation that permeate throughout my body no matter my physical location in the world.



# Sounds Out Of Place: My Unrooted Experience Of Music

Written by Shi Chen
Designed by Louise Lee

If you were to ask me: "what one place has most informed your music taste?" I'd probably say the internet.

I know how that sounds. Even just five years ago this would've been near sacreligious to say, but music has never lived in any singular physical space for me. It's digital. It's in my phone, my car, and the voices I hear on TV. The internet has become its locale—songs are played by the radio, by the media we watch, by the apps I use, and are imbued into what we call "pop culture" and then passed onto droves of people from countless diasporic backgrounds.

And what a beautiful thing that is. It's something I'm incredibly grateful for, especially as a second generation Chinese-Canadian (American?) who's always found himself lost when it comes to defining home. I was born in Canada, lived in China until age 3, moved to a suburb of Chicago for elementary school, then to a different suburb for middle and high school, and finally, back to Canada for university. Consequently, my music taste isn't bound to Toronto, to Chicago, or any of the places I've only temporarily lived in. And yet, there's always been some sort of fixed, unchanging characteristic to the music I love. This characteristic just so happens to be concordant with the people I grew up with, people thousands of miles across the country, and people on the other side of the globe.

Still, I find myself torn. On one hand, I feel blessed to have grown up in the advent of social media and pop culture, spaces that were rich, prolific, and opportunistic in my journey of music discovery. But on the other hand, reducing the origins of popular music down to this elusive term "pop culture" seems circular and honestly a little blasphemous. But who can blame us? Pop culture subjugates sound in a way that makes it impossible for listeners to know or even care about the actual roots of the sound, roots that are very often painful or uncomfortable to confront. It's accessible. It's easy. It almost makes you forget that the trap beats



## Battle Records

**Brian's Picks:** Eric B. & Rakim, *Paid in Full* & The Clash, *London Calling*

Battle Records was up next. This store wears an impressive collection of autographs on its walls, everyone from Aretha Franklin to Radiohead. The owner, Brian, is incredibly passionate about music, and he definitely knows his shit. In the three minutes he spent answering my question, he brought up at least a dozen separate favourite albums and artists from every genre possible. I could've spent the whole article talking about all his favourites, but I'll narrow it down to the first two Brian mentioned.

I was surprised Paid in Full came out the year it did. I don't know that much about hip hop, but I would have guessed this '87 album came out at least in the 90s. The rhythm throughout the album is so good – you are carried forward to each rhyme, each verse, and each song.

**Favorite Song:** "I Ain't No Joke"

As for The Clash, what can I say that others haven't already? This album is pure fun. I knew more about London Calling than any other album going into this article, but it was a joy to sit down and listen to it all the way through again. I am always surprised by the sheer amount of sounds they were able to fit into the runtime.

**Favorite Song:** "Lost in the Supermarket"

## Resolute Records

**Jovahn's Picks:** Idles, *TANGK* & Fontaines, D.C. *Romance*

We are leaving the basement behind for an upstairs room. Resolute Records is the right kind of small, you walk in and are immediately in conversation with whoever is there. You're in luck though, the owner Jovahn is a delight to have a chat with.

*TANGK* is not my usual listen. The sound of the album is exactly like dread slowly building in your chest. Maybe I need to listen to the rest of IDLES' work to understand the context of the album; I don't think I know exactly what they are going for.

**Favourite Song:** "Dancer" (with LCD Soundsystem!)

Romance was an amazing album to walk up Spadina to. The first two songs just reeled me in, especially "Starburster". I wish the whole album sounded like it, but I'm not too disappointed. I love how bold the record can be while taking its time in the slower, hazier moments.

**Favourite Song:** "Starburster"

## Neurotica

**Scotty's Pick:** Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band, *Doc at the Radar Station*

Walking through the door at Neurotica, you feel like you have just been swallowed by the stacked up music. One thing that stood out to me is how good music sounded in here. The speakers are buried, but the split still sounds incredible somehow when you stand in the middle of the back aisle. The owner, Scotty, did not hesitate to pick his favorite album out. Everyone else toiled over their choice, but Scotty moved quickly to the back corner to grab the record.

Every song on Doc at the Radar Station feels like it's unraveling. If someone put this on aux at a party, they would be shunned immediately. The singer is screaming? Choking? Wailing? Can somebody get him some help please? Everyone sounds like they were in separate rooms while recording, the drums in particular come in and out as they please. It's strange, lurching, abrasive, and in the best possible way, unforgettable. I don't know what to tell you; I don't know why I like it either. Go give it a listen and try and figure it out.

**Favourite Song:** "Ashtray Heart"

# Dead Dog

**Stephen's Pick:** The Kills, *God Games*

My first step was Dead Dog Records on Bloor. I browsed a bit while building up the nerve to ask my question. First off, the prices are amazing. Go get some vintage Dylan for $10. When I eventually spoke to the owner Stephen, he was genuinely a joy to speak to, alleviating a lot of my stress. He pointed me towards a new favourite: The Kills' recent album God Games. It's moody. It's gospel. It was perfect for stomping around to my next stop. This is an album that makes you wish you had better headphones to appreciate the bass – me and my airpods weren't cutting it.

**Favorite Song:** "103"

*Asking people so deep in the music scene what their favourite album led to inconsistent results for me. The recommendations introduced some incredible records – others left me feeling adrift. Certain records shudder at the idea of being pleasant to listen to, but I cannot yet enjoy music any other way. I Inside the Old Year Dying and Doc at the Radar Station were just so out there, disorienting me with each song. I understand why these albums are good music, but I struggle to casually listen while walking around the city.*

*You don't need to go on an odyssey of record stores to find new albums like I did, but really, music is not supposed to be a solitary experience to begin with. Not every recommendation was an instant favourite, but I would not have found a single one if I didn't go speak to these incredibly passionate people. Each album was an invitation into a stranger's life, all singing to them in ways I could only begin to understand. So I say, break free of your computer-generated niche! Go out there, talk to people, and build your own analog algorithm.*

# Sonic Boom

**Jon's Picks:** LOVE Fiend, *Handle With Care* AND Laughing, *Because It's True*
**Sara's Pick:** Faye Webster, *I Know I'm Funny haha*

Somehow I had never stepped foot into Sonic Boom before this. I didn't know what the hype was about until I realized there was a downstairs. This place is huge! I spoke to two separate staff members who were happy to show me what they've been playing on repeat.

*Handle With Care* is the kind of album you have to get up and dance in your kitchen to. That is exactly what I did yesterday while making lunch, and I think it's the perfect listening experience for this record. It's so 80s that you'd be shocked it came out this year. The intensely positive vibes left me a little exhausted after the album was over though, but maybe that's just my dancing.

**Favourite Song:** "Just For Eddie"

I feel like I should be biking on the lakefront while listening to Because It's True. The harmonies come together really well, but the real standout to me is the jangly guitar chiming in. I know they're Laughing; I wonder if they are able to keep going in their sophomore album.

**Favourite Song:** "Bruised"

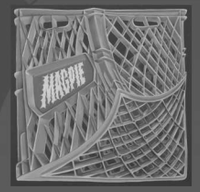
I Know I'm Funny haha is such a warm album. It's not loud, and it feels closer to a friend making you laugh over coffee. It definitely has a distinct sound, but this means some of the songs blend together for me. The slight warping, the occasional strings, the witty lyrics – I'm a huge fan.

**Favourite Song:** "A Stranger"



# Adolescent Sounds of Vancouver in Peach Pit's Magpie

Written by Jyotsna Kumar
Designed by Louise Lee




When I think of indie rock band Peach Pit's music, I think about the times in Vancouver when you realize that it is just about to be spring—when the seagulls come cawing back, and the cherry blossoms are in full bloom. Their music is effortlessly casual; it requires you to meditate on nothing more than where you will hang out next: perhaps your friend's garage, or maybe the beach. Nothing is set in stone.

The North Van quartet released their fourth studio album, Magpie, this October. In true Peach Pit fashion, it features their trademark languid sounds and nonsensical lyrics. Listening to the album, I started to reflect on how Peach Pit could be considered a modern example of Vancouver's regional sound. Much of their music, such as the opening track "Every Little Thing," carries bright guitar riffs and quiet vocals, harkening back to Mac Demarco, another British Columbian indie musician. Both artists paint a picture of Vancouver almost akin to its southern counterpart, LA. You'll never hear how the rain will hit the city for days or how the sheer cost of living gives the residents constant anxiety. The version of the city that Peach Pit portray in their music is a romantic image of how things could be if summer lasted forever.

Peach Pit never dwells on a problem for too long, not even on proper rhyme schemes. In "Yasmina," lead singer Neil Smith rhymes the titular Yasmina with the line "you're anything but mine-a." The song then descends into a droning guitar solo, ultimately making it the perfect song for driving up to the interior for a summer camping trip, windows down with the mountains looming ahead. Magpie becomes ideal background music, as the album knows when to grab your attention with loud guitars and booming drums and then fade out with slower, sleepier tracks such as Am I Your Girl. The album is a solid body of work, with each song blending seamlessly into the other, something they've done this many times before. There is no progression of maturity within Peach Pit's discography; in Magpie, the sounds are almost identical to that of their first album, Being So Normal. The only respite is "Did You Love Somebody," which leans towards the traditional folk one would expect out of the Pacific Northwest. The softer sound in the track accompanies Smith's gentle voice much better than the other songs on the album and also removes the edge of youth their music has long held.

The Vancouver Peach Pit attempts to encapsulate in their sound is not at all the same Vancouver I grew up in, but that is their very point. The goal of Peach Pit's music is to be grounded in Vancouver just enough that it creates a form of escapism. They aim to make you think the city is about clear skies and beach days with your pals. They are painting an ideal image of Vancouver rather than a replica. Although Magpie does not directly reference streets in Vancouver like in their previous work (gone are the days when they were walking up Granville Street), you can still hear the city within their music. In four albums, Peach Pit has rarely changed in sound, but that may be their appeal. For Vancouver residents and non-residents alike, maybe everyone just needs a little escapism and a chance to dream that the city Peach Pit portrays with their surf rock and mumble lyrics is out there. Maybe there will even be cold beer, bright sun, and salty shores in the future.